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Ministry of Forests

LOCAL PLAN IMPROVES REC SITE AND TRAIL MANAGEMENT

BURNS LAKE – A five-year plan from Burns Lake Community Forest Ltd. to look after 24 forest service recreation sites and six trails shows the immense value of local stewardship, Forests Minister Michael de Jong said today.

"This is exactly what we expected when we invited communities and users to take on responsibility for recreation sites and trails earlier this year," de Jong told a gathering at the Pinkut Lake recreation site north of Burns Lake.

Burns Lake Community Forest was created in 1998 and signed a community forest pilot agreement two years later to manage forest and non-forest resources on more than 19,000 hectares of Crown land around Burns Lake. The community-owned corporation began maintaining the recreation sites and trails on May 13 and agreed to prepare the long-term management strategy by the end of July.

"Recreation and tourism have always been an important part of our forest management plan," said Cliff Manning, president of Burns Lake Community Forest. "We plan to work with our community partners to make sure the campsites and trails continue to provide a top-notch wilderness recreation adventure for residents and visitors alike."

Bulkley Valley-Stikine MLA Dennis MacKay congratulated Burns Lake Community Forest and urged other community groups to follow its example. "As residents of the area, we know firsthand the worth of local campsites and trails," he said. "One of our greatest natural resources is the outdoors, and this type of community involvement ensures enjoyment by visitors and locals."

To support the government's goal to restore sound fiscal management, the Ministry of Forests announced earlier this year that it would focus on its core stewardship and forest management duties and gradually withdraw from managing forest service recreation sites and trails. It is maintaining about 600 sites and 170 trails this summer, and will continue to administer agreements with organizations managing sites and trails on a non-commercial basis.

"Community groups across British Columbia are interested in managing recreation sites and trails, and many – like Burns Lake Community Forest – are already working on agreements with their local forest service office," de Jong said.

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